



U.S. Department of Justice

Paul M. Warner

**United States Attorney
District of Utah**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 8, 2005**

PRESS RELEASE

***GRAND JURY RETURNS INDICTMENT
CHARGING NINE WITH MONEY LAUNDERING,
OTHER VIOLATIONS;***

***Charges Follow Two-Year
Organized Crime Drug Enforcement
Task Force Investigation***

SALT LAKE CITY – A federal grand jury has returned an 11-count indictment charging nine individuals, all Mexican nationals living in the Salt Lake City metropolitan area, with conspiracy to commit money laundering and other financial-related violations for their role in running a series of illegal money transmitter businesses that were allegedly used to launder millions of dollars in drug money and funnel the proceeds to accounts in Mexico and throughout the United States.

The nine defendants, including four brothers, were charged in an indictment returned Wednesday with conspiracy to commit money laundering, conducting an unlicensed money transmitting business, failure to file a currency transaction report, structuring monetary transactions, re-entry of a previously deported alien, and alien in possession of a firearm. All but three of the defendants, Jose Luis Aguilera-Meza, Adalberto Aguilera-Meza, and Veronica Moran, are in custody. A list of the defendants is attached.

The indictment alleges that, beginning as far back as 1999, the suspects operated a succession of money transmitter businesses that were used to launder proceeds from illegal drug

sales. According to investigators, the defendants employed a variety of methods to mask the illegal transactions, including moving the money through local currency exchange houses and check cashing services and maintaining multiple bank accounts.

The charges are the result of a two-year multi-agency undercover investigation involving U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation (IRS CI), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), the FBI, and local law enforcement agencies.

The probe began after investigators uncovered information that a wire transmitter business known as Envios Aguilera had been used to transmit funds belonging to a suspect in a drug investigation. Despite losing its license to operate as a money transmitter in August 2002, records show Envios Aguilera transferred millions of dollars on behalf of its clients. Investigators believe that while some of the money being transferred was from legal sources, millions of dollars came from the proceeds of illegal drug sales.

According to J. Wesley Eddy, Special Agent in Charge of IRS Criminal Investigation for Utah and Nevada, "IRS Criminal Investigation is committed to fighting the war on drugs along with other federal, state and local agencies. Drug trafficking is a crime that revolves around money and money laundering often involves an enormous amount of financial transactions and financial outlets throughout the world. Our agents have the law enforcement and financial expertise to assist other agencies with narcotics cases by following the money."

"This case demonstrates the real threat posed by unlicensed money transmittal businesses. Any criminal or terrorist can come to these underground businesses and have millions wired anywhere in the world with no questions asked," said Joseph Romel, assistant special agent-in-charge of ICE investigations in Utah. "ICE's goal is to identify, disrupt and ultimately dismantle these underground financing and transmittal operations."

"The DEA's Utah Financial Investigative Team (UFIT) continues to find success in identifying and disrupting the flow of drug money back to the source of the drug supply. These investigations are very significant and a top priority for DEA. We can not dismantle the complete drug trafficking organization until we can identify and seize the organization's only motivator, money," said Jeffrey D. Sweetin, DEA Special Agent in Charge of the Rocky Mountain Field Division. The UFIT includes investigators from DEA, IRS, FBI, ICE, the West Valley Police Department, and the Salt Lake City Police Department.

The following is a summary of the charges for each individual in the indictment:

1. EUSEBIO AGUILERA-MEZA, Age 41, DOB 8-26-64; West Jordan

Count 1 - Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering -- alleges that from 1999 through at least March 31, 2005, defendant transported monetary instruments from Utah to Mexico with the

intent to promote the unlawful activity of dealing in a controlled substance and to conceal its proceeds.

Count 3 - Conducting an Unlicensed Money Transmitting Business – alleges defendant conducted an unlicensed money transmitting business from August 2, 2002 through at least November 18, 2005.

Count 5 - Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering - alleges from not later than March 31, 2005 and continuing through at least November 18, 2005, defendant conspired to launder monetary instruments (from an undercover law enforcement officer) believing that the property was derived from his drug distribution.

Count 6 - Failure to File a Currency Transaction Report - alleges that on or about August 3, 2005, defendant failed to file a currency transaction report, Form 4789.

Count 7 - Failure to File a Currency Transaction Report - alleges that on or about September 1, 2005, defendant failed to file a currency transaction report, Form 4789.

Count 9 - Reentry of a Previously Removed Alien – alleges that on November 18, 2005, defendant, an alien who on or about December 3, 2004 was deported from the United States, was found in Utah without consent from the Attorney General to reapply for admission.

2. JOSE LUIS AGUILERA-MEZA - Age 45, DOB 9-23-60; West Valley City

Count 1 - Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering - alleges that from 1999 through at least March 31, 2005, defendant transported monetary instruments from Utah to Mexico with the intent to promote the unlawful activity of dealing in a controlled substance and to conceal its proceeds.

Count 2 - Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering - alleges that from August 2, 2002, through at least February 2, 2005 he transported monetary instruments from Utah to Mexico with the intent to promote the unlawful activity of dealing in a controlled substance and to conceal its proceeds.

Count 4 – Conducting an Unlicensed Money Transmitting Business – alleges that defendant conducted an unlicensed money transmitting business from August 2, 2002, through at least February 2, 2005.

Count 8 - Structuring Monetary Transactions - alleges that from not later than February 27, 2004 and through at least September 9, 2005, defendant conspired to structure transactions by breaking amounts of currency in excess of \$10,000 into amounts less than \$10,000. He opened several bank accounts and made multiple single cash deposits in amounts less than \$10,000 which in a single day totaled more than \$10,000 and during the period totaled more than \$350,000.

3. JOSE ANTONIO AGUILERA-MEZA - Age 39, DOB 2-3-66; West Valley City

Count 1 - Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering - alleges that from 1999 through at least March 31, 2005, defendant transported monetary instruments from Utah to Mexico with the intent to promote the unlawful activity of dealing in a controlled substance and to conceal its proceeds.

4. ADALBERTO AGUILERA-MEZA - Age 51, DOB 4-6-54; West Jordan

Count 1 - Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering - alleges that from 1999 through at least March 31, 2005 defendant transported monetary instruments from Utah to Mexico with the intent to promote the unlawful activity of dealing in a controlled substance and to conceal its proceeds.

5. VERONICA MORAN - Age 32, DOB 6-15-72; West Jordan

Count 3 - Conducting an Unlicensed Money Transmitting Business - alleges defendant conducted an unlicensed money transmitting business from August 2, 2002 through at least November 18, 2005.

Count 5 - Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering - alleges from not later than March 31, 2005 and continuing through at least November 18, 2005, defendant conspired to launder monetary instruments (through an undercover law enforcement officer) knowing that the property was derived from her marijuana dealing.

Count 6 - Failure to File a Currency Transaction Report - alleges that on or about August 3, 2005, defendant failed to file a currency transaction report, Form 4789.

Count 7 - Failure to File a Currency Transaction Report - alleges that on or about September 1, 2005, defendant failed to file a currency transaction report, Form 4789.

6. GUSTAVO MORAN-GABINO - Age 56, DOB 11-21-49; West Jordan

Count 3 - Conducting an Unlicensed Money Transmitting Business - alleges defendant conducted an unlicensed money transmitting business from August 2, 2002 through at least November 18, 2005.

Count 5 - Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering - alleges from not later than March 31, 2005 and continuing through at least November 18, 2005, defendant conspired to launder monetary instruments (through an undercover law enforcement officer) knowing that the property was derived from her marijuana dealing.

Count 7 - Failure to File a Currency Transaction Report - alleges that on or about September 1, 2005, defendant failed to file a currency transaction report, Form 4789.

Count 10 - Re-entry of a Previously Removed Alien - alleges that on November 18, 2005, the defendant, an alien who on or about August 5, 2002, was deported from the United States, was found in Utah without consent from the Attorney General to reapply for admission.

7. JOSE JAIME CONTRERAS-LIMON - Age 33, DOB 1-7-72; Taylorsville

Count 1 - Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering - alleges that from 1999 through at least March 31, 2005 defendant transported monetary instruments from Utah to Mexico with the intent to promote the unlawful activity of dealing in a controlled substance and to conceal its proceeds.

Count 2 - Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering - alleges that from August 2, 2002, through at least February 2, 2005, he transported monetary instruments from Utah to Mexico with the intent to promote the unlawful activity of dealing in a controlled substance and to conceal its proceeds.

Count 4 - Conducting an Unlicensed Money Transmitting Business - alleges that the defendant conducted an unlicensed money transmitting business from August 2, 2002 through at least February 2, 2005.

Count 8 - Conspiracy to Structuring Monetary Transactions - alleges that not later than February 27, 2004, and through at least September 9, 2005, defendant conspired to structure transactions by breaking amounts of currency in excess of \$10,000 into amounts less than \$10,000. He opened several bank accounts and made multiple single cash deposits in amounts less than \$10,000 which in a single day totaled more than \$10,000 and during the period totaled more than \$350,000.

Count 11 - Alien in Possession of a Firearm - alleges that on or about December 5, 2005, the defendant, being an alien illegally in the United States, possessed a 9mm Astra handgun firearm.

8. SANDRA MEZA-DE CONTRERAS - Age 32, DOB 1-27-73; Taylorsville

Count 4 - Conducting an Unlicensed Money Transmitting Business - alleges the defendant conducted an unlicensed money transmitting business from August 2, 2002 through at least February 2, 2005.

Count 8 - Conspiracy to Structuring Monetary Transactions - alleges that not later than February 27, 2004, and through at least September 9, 2005, defendant conspired to structure transactions by breaking amounts of currency in excess of \$10,000 into amounts less than \$10,000. He opened several bank accounts and made multiple single cash deposits in amounts less than \$10,000 which in a single day totaled more than \$10,000 and during the period totaled more than \$350,000.

9. ALMA RUIZ - Age 25, DOB 2-27-80; Sandy

Count 2 - Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering - alleges that from August 2, 2002, through at least February 2, 2005. she transported monetary instruments from Utah to Mexico with the intent to promote the unlawful activity of dealing in a controlled substance and to conceal its proceeds.

Count 4 - Conducting an Unlicensed Money Transmitting Business - alleges that the defendant conducted an unlicensed money transmitting business from August 2, 2002 through at least February 2, 2005.

Potential penalties:

Money Laundering: Up to 20 years; \$1 million

Money Transmitting: Up to five years; \$1 million

Structuring: Up to five years; \$250,000 fine

Illegal Re-entry: Up to two years; \$250,00 fine

Alien in possession of firearm: Up to 10 years; \$250,000 fine

Failure to File a Currency Transaction Report: Up to five years; \$250,000 fine

Defendants charged in indictments are presumed innocent unless or until proven guilty in court.